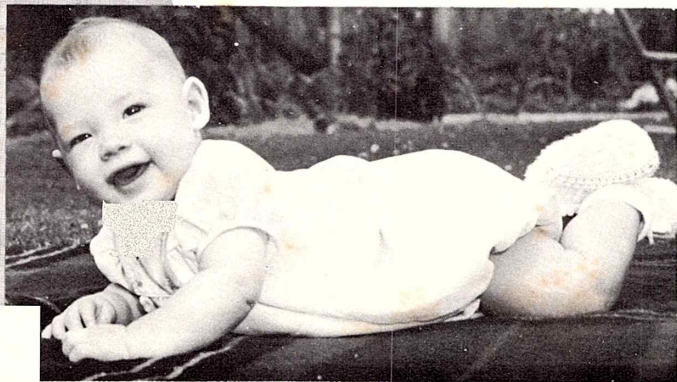


THE PROCESS OF adoption





THE PROCESS OF ADOPTION

This is the third in a series of pamphlets about adoption and is intended for people who are definitely interested in adopting a child or who want more information before coming to a decision.

● THE ROLE OF THE CHILD WELFARE DIVISION IN ADOPTION

Sooner or later the Division comes into all but a few adoptions because:

- Child Welfare social workers arrange the majority of adoptive placements.
- A Child Welfare social worker's * written approval is required, or an interim order obtained from the Court, before any child is placed with a view to adoption. The overwhelming majority (over 99%) of applicants rely on a social worker's approval rather than an approach to the Court.
- A Child Welfare social worker is required to report to the Court on almost every application for an adoption order†.

* Substitute Maori Welfare social worker for Child Welfare social worker where the child and at least one of the applicants is Maori.

†Where the child is being adopted by a natural parent a Magistrate may choose not to call for a Child Welfare report.

● HOW YOUR ELIGIBILITY IS DETERMINED

The Initial Interview:

Applicants are generally asked to call at their local Child Welfare Office for an initial interview. You are required to fill in an application form giving details of your ages, circumstances, and preferences. You are asked to supply the names of people who know you well and who can give you a character reference, and a Police clearance is called for. This is obtained by the Child Welfare Division and rarely involves a visit by the Police. You could be asked to produce medical certificates to show your general state of health. If you have any particular health problems it is wise to discuss these at the interview.

● *The Home Visit:*

The social worker will visit you in your home for further discussion in your own surroundings where

you may feel more comfortable and at ease. This also provides an opportunity to see the accommodation you have for a child.

● **LOCATING A SUITABLE CHILD**

You may already know of a child who is or will be available for adoption. If not, you can have your name put on a list at the Child Welfare Office or apply to the Matron of your local maternity hospital or of a home which caters for unmarried mothers. No matter how the child is located, you should know that you may not take him into your home until you have been issued with an approval by the Child Welfare social worker (or have been granted an Interim Adoption Order by the Court).

- **THE ISSUE OF THE APPROVAL**

When a suitable child has been located and the Child Welfare social worker feels able from all the inquiries to support you in your application to adopt, a written approval will be issued in respect of this particular child.

- **FAMILY BENEFIT**

When the child has been placed in your home, you should make application to the local district office of the Department of Social Security for Family Benefit.

THE LEGAL PROCESS OF ADOPTION

- **NEED FOR A SOLICITOR**

Adoption orders are made in the Magistrate's Court and you will need a solicitor to prepare and present your application which must be made within 1 month of obtaining the social worker's written approval.

● THE INTERIM ORDER

When the social worker has reported to the Court, the Magistrate, if satisfied with the placement, will grant an interim order.

The interim order gives you

- custody (not guardianship) of the child for the duration of the order
- an opportunity to see how the child is developing
- opportunities to discuss any problems before taking the final step of adoption
- a chance to have the child medically examined. You are advised to do this and should you decide to, a medical form drawn up by the Department of Health will be supplied to you as a guide to your doctor.

You should note that the interim order lapses after 12 months and application for a final adoption order should be made by your solicitor within that period.

This is normally done 6 months after the interim order has been granted.

Most Courts require adoptive applicants and the child to attend the Court hearing. Adoptions are generally dealt with by a Magistrate in his office and not in the Courtroom and the proceedings are not open to the public.

● **YOUR OBLIGATIONS DURING THE INTERIM PERIOD**

You must :

- Obtain the permission of the Court before leaving New Zealand.
- Notify the Child Welfare Office at least 7 days before changing your residence, except in an emergency in which case notification must be given within 48 hours of your leaving.

- **CHILD WELFARE VISITS**

A social worker will visit you during the period of the interim order. You should feel free to talk about any problems or misgivings you may have.

- **THE ADOPTION ORDER**

If all has gone well during the interim period, 6 months after the granting of the interim order, your solicitor may apply on your behalf for an adoption order.

The Court calls for a social worker's report and the adoption order is usually granted without the need for the applicants or the child to attend Court.

Once the adoption order is granted, the child is yours as if he had been born to you. All previous relationships he may have had are severed, and your surname is conferred on him together with the first names you choose for him. A New Zealand adoption order does not change the race, nationality, or citizenship of the adopted child.

- **THE BIRTH CERTIFICATE**

The Registrar-General of Births and the Registrar of Births nearest to where the child was born are notified by the Registrar of the Court that an order has been made. The original birth registration is then amended to show the child's new names. Any certificate issued subsequently will show these and, except in the case of single adoptive parents, no certificate will indicate the fact that the child has been adopted unless you specifically request this.

- **HOW LONG DOES THE PROCESS TAKE?**

A typical, straightforward adoption usually takes less than a year to complete. This does not include the time it takes for a social worker to make the initial assessment of your suitability, nor the time you may have to wait until a suitable child is located. These times will vary from district to district according to the availability of infants for adoption and according to your particular requirements and circumstances.

● AFTER THE CHILD BECOMES YOURS

The making of an adoption order is only a beginning. Although it is true that attitudes towards adoption have changed, adopting a child is not exactly the same as having given birth to a child. Adoptive parents who have faced the differences are usually able to enjoy their parenthood more than those who insist that their feelings and experiences are exactly like those of all other parents.

Adoptive parents do have some problems which are special to their situation. Foremost amongst these is the problem of when and how to tell their child that he is adopted. Throughout the world those working in the field of adoption agree that an adopted child should be told the truth about his adoption and that this should be done early in his life; preferably as soon as he can understand, but certainly before he reaches adolescence.

FURTHER QUESTIONS ?

Pamphlets cannot attempt to cover all the questions that you may have and the social worker will be very willing to discuss these with you.

In some city areas Parents' Centre groups organise discussions for adoptive parents and prospective adoptive parents.

If after reading this pamphlet you want more information on any aspect of adoption, do not hesitate to get in touch with your nearest Child Welfare Office which is listed in the telephone directory under Government Departments—Education.

Amongst the material available on adoption the following may be helpful:

A Guide to Adoption, Eileen Saunders (A. H. & A. W. Reed).

So You Want to Adopt a Baby, Ruth Carson,
Public Affairs Pamphlet (U.S.A.) No. 17.

You and Your Adopted Child, Eda J. Le Shan,
Public Affairs Pamphlet (U.S.A.) No. 274.
Basic Facts of Human Heredity, Amram Scheinfeld
(Pan Books Ltd., U.K.).
Adoption and After, Louise Raymond (Harper and
Bros. New York).
Child Care and the Growth of Love, John Bowlby
(Pelican).
We Adopted It, I. Arnolfi (Routledge and Kegan
Paul).
Yours by Choice, Jane Rowe (Mills and Boon,
London).



*Pamphlet No. 3 in a Series
Prepared and Distributed
by the Child Welfare Division
of the Department of Education*

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